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## CATULLUS AND THE PHASELUS OF HIS FOURTH POEM.<sup>1</sup>

BY CLEMENT LAWRENCE SMITH.

THAT Catullus sailed home from Bithynia in the yacht whose prowess he sings so charmingly in his fourth poem has always been an accepted article of philological faith. An article of faith it is in the truest sense. The poet does not so much as hint that he was ever on board the yacht, but tradition placed him there in the picture which the first reading of his fresh verses painted on our fancy, and we never ask for proofs. The earliest editors of Catullus<sup>2</sup> appear to have quietly taken for granted, what seems indeed at first sight the natural supposition, that the poet, in describing the yacht's voyage, is describing his own journey; and their successors for four hundred years accepted this plausible, if unproven, hypothesis without question. The serious difficulties which the hypothesis involves have not altogether escaped the notice of scholars, and various attempts have been made to explain them away; but in the discussion which has sprung up about them the hypothesis itself has been treated, as if by common consent, with the respect which is due to unquestioned fact.

To this statement there is, so far as I know, but one exception. Baehrens, in his commentary published in 1885, boldly rejected the traditional belief, and maintained that the voyage of the phaselus had nothing to do with the poet's return from Bithynia. Unfortunately Baehrens, in support of this view, lays the greatest stress on

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<sup>1</sup> Read before the American Philological Association at Princeton, N.J., July 7, 1891.

<sup>2</sup> How much the scholars of the sixteenth century occupied themselves with this poem is illustrated by a little duodecimo volume which I find in the Harvard Library, with the title: *Phaselus Catulli et ad eam quotquot exstant Parodiae, cum Annotationibus doctissimorum virorum . . . Lugduni, apud Thomam Soubron, MDXCII*. It contains, besides the familiar *Sabinus ille* of the *Catalepta*, eleven modern parodies on the phaselus poem.

an obscure passage in the Bernese scholia on Virgil (Georg. IV. 289). The scholium is attributed to Junilius and, as given by Hagen, reads in the MSS. as follows: '*phaselis* genus nauium picturam sicus phasillus ille quem agiunt auctorem esse nauium calaetarum quem habuit Serenus hospes.' In spite of the hopeless state of this text, it is still reasonably certain that the scholiast's '*phasillus ille*' is a quotation of the opening words of Catullus' poem, and the statement '*quem habuit Serenus hospes*' must be taken — for what it is worth — as probably referring to our yacht. Baehrens thinks it is worth much, and for him it settles the question of the ownership of the yacht. The name Serenus, he holds, cannot be an invention, but must have come down from a good and trustworthy source. Serenus, and not Catullus, was the yacht's owner. Who Serenus was, is of course unknown. Baehrens guesses that he was a townsman and friend of the poet, a *negotiator*, who had dedicated his outworn yacht to the Dioscuri; and that at his request Catullus wrote this poem, to be set up on a tablet in the shrine.

It must be acknowledged that Baehrens is here building on very slender foundations. The authority of the scholia is too uncertain, and the text in which they are transmitted too corrupt, to justify us in accepting their statements without other evidence. The most we are entitled to say in this case is that, if there are other grounds for believing that the yacht did not belong to Catullus, the owner's name may have been Serenus.

But Baehrens had a better reason for his view, and one which he would have done well to make more prominent. In a brief note on verse 25 of the poem he points out that the words '*sed haec prius fuere; nunc,*' etc., with which the poet concludes his description, require us to suppose an interval of some years between the end of the voyage and the writing of the poem, and that as Catullus died in B.C. 54, the voyage of the *phaselus* could not have been as late as B.C. 56, the year in which Catullus returned from Bithynia.

This argument, almost in itself conclusive, in my judgment, Baehrens tucks away in a note of four lines, where it has attracted little attention. In the present paper I propose to examine the question more at length, and to set forth the reasons which have convinced me that the prevailing view is untenable. The reader who is sufficiently interested to follow me through the discussion will find it

convenient to have the poem before him, and I therefore print it here : —

- Phasellus ille quem uidetis, hospites,  
ait fuisse nauium celerrimus,  
neque ullius natantis impetum trabis  
nequisse praeterire, sive palmulis  
5 opus foret uolare siue linteo.  
Et hoc negat minacis Adriatici  
negare litus insulasue Cycladas  
Rhodumque nobilem horridamque Thraciam  
Propontida trucemue Ponticum sinum,  
10 ubi iste post phasellus antea fuit  
comata silua ; nam Cytorio in iugo  
loquente saepe sibilum edidit coma.  
Amastri Pontica et Cytore buxifer,  
tibi haec fuisse et esse cognitissima  
15 ait phasellus ; ultima ex origine  
tuo stetisse dicit in cacumine,  
tuo imbuisse palmulas in aequore,  
et inde tot per impotentia freta  
erum tulisse, laeua siue dextera  
20 uocaret aura, siue utrumque Iupiter  
simul secundus incidisset in pedem ;  
neque ulla uota litoralibus deis  
sibi esse facta, cum ueniret a mari  
nouissimo hunc ad usque limpidum lacum.  
25 Sed haec prius fuere : nunc recondita  
senet quiete seque dedicat tibi,  
gemelle Castor et gemelle Castoris.

The traditional view that in these verses Catullus describes his own voyage has only one solid fact to rest upon, — the poet's actual journey from Bithynia to Italy, — a fact of course inadequate in itself, because it is quite consistent with the opposite view. To supplement this fact we have nothing but such evidence as the poem itself affords ; for Catullus nowhere else makes any allusion to the phaselus, nor does he anywhere give the least indication of his route from Asia to Italy, which we might compare with that of the yacht.

What then do we find in the poem itself? A careful reading discloses nothing that can properly be called evidence: the poet's interest in the yacht and its voyage, and his knowledge of its route,—that is all. The verses show admiration, but give no distinct indication of personal interest,—a fact of much significance when we consider the directness and unreserve of Catullus when he expresses his own feelings. The yacht is made to tell its own story, and what it has to tell is this: It was once the fleetest of ships and could pass any timber afloat. It was built at Amastris in Paphlagonia; there it was launched, and from there it “carried its master over many wild seas” to the shores of the Adriatic. The points mentioned on the way are the Euxine (Ponticus sinus), the Propontis, Rhodes, the Cyclades. The journey ended in a ‘limpidus lacus,’ where the poem represents the yacht as laid away, out of service, in old age and repose “dedicating itself” to the Dioscuri.

What now do we know, or what can we safely infer, about the poet's journey? The main facts are not disputed. He went to Bithynia in the suite of Memmius, whose headquarters were at Nicaea. In regard to the outward journey we have no information. The year of Memmius' administration of the province is generally thought to be B.C. 57, and the homeward journey would, therefore, under the usual practice of Roman provincial governors, fall in the the spring of B.C. 56; but Ellis thinks there is good reason for believing that Memmius governed Bithynia in B.C. 65, in which case the return falls in B.C. 64. That it was in the spring appears also from the forty-sixth poem, in which Catullus takes leave of his colleagues at Nicaea:—

Iam uer egelidos refert tepores,  
iam caeli furor aequinoctialis  
iocundis zephyri silescit aureis.  
Linquantur Phrygii, Catulle, campi  
Nicaeaeque ager uber aestuosae;  
ad claras Asiae volumus urbes.

\* \* \* \* \*

O dulces comitum ualete coetus,  
longe quos simul a domo profectos  
diuersae uariae uiae reportant.

From the last two verses it appears that the members of the governor's suite did not make the homeward, as they had made

the outward, journey together. Catullus had in prospect a tour of the "famous cities of Asia." Which of these he visited or how he travelled, we do not know. We only know of his visit to one place in Asia, — his brother's tomb in the Troad; but whether he made this visit on his way out or on his way home, we are not informed. His homeward journey, from Asia to Italy, is a complete blank in our knowledge. At the end of it we find him in his father's country-seat at Sirmio, on Lake Garda, which he hails with an outburst of enthusiasm (XXXI.) : —

Paene insularum Sirmio insularumque  
ocelle, quascumque in liquentibus stagnis  
marique vasto fert uterque Neptunus,  
quam te libenter quamque laetus inuiso.

He is thoroughly happy to be once more at home after the worry of his 'peregrinus labor,' and thankful for his safe return as a blessing almost too good to be real : —

uix mi ipse credens Thuniam atque Bithunos  
liquisse campos et uidere te in tuto.

This poem was evidently written in the first days after his return, when he was brimfull of the joy of 'Home Again.' The contrast between its tone and that of the phaselus poem, which is commonly assigned to the same time, is significant.

The available points of comparison, then, between the poet's journey and the yacht's voyage are at the beginning and at the end; and at both of these points there are obvious difficulties in the way of accepting the traditional view. These difficulties have been partly recognized. Westphal sought to escape from them by abandoning the traditional view so far as it relates to the beginning and the end of the journey, and keeping the poet and the yacht in company only in that intermediate part of the voyage, of which we are safely ignorant. Westphal thinks the yacht did not belong to Catullus; the poet, by previous arrangement, joined the ship at Rhodes and from there sailed in it to some Adriatic harbor (possibly on the Greek coast), the 'limpidus lacus' of our poem.

Munro rejected this explanation, not without reason, as giving "a very lame and impotent meaning to the piece," and attempted to

clear the matter up in a better way. The difficulty at the beginning of the journey is this: Catullus began his journey at Nicaea, as the verses quoted above, in which he took leave of his companions, show; the voyage of the yacht, *with its master on board*, began at Amastris, according to the plain intent of the poet's words in IV. :—

16 tuo imbuisse palmulas in aequore,  
et *inde* tot per impotentia freta  
erum tulisse.

It follows, therefore, that if Catullus was the yacht's master and sailed home in it, he travelled first from Nicaea eastward to Amastris, and embarked there; and this is the view maintained by Ellis, in his second edition, against Munro's theory. Munro refused to believe that Catullus would "make a most difficult and laborious land journey" to Amastris, "solely to add to the length and annoyance of the sea-voyage." He adhered to the common view that "the phaselus was unquestionably built for Catullus or purchased by him in Bithynia," but held that the poet would not go to Amastris to embark; he would rather "order his yacht to be brought round along the 'surly' Pontus, through the Bosphorus into the Propontis, and would embark with all his belongings either at Cios . . . or at Myrlea (Apamea), to both of which there was a short and easy road from Nicaea."

To reconcile this view with the poet's language in IV., Munro is obliged to take *inde*, vs. 18, in a temporal sense; and he translates the verses last quoted: "in your waters [she] handselled her blades; *and next* she carried her master over so many raging seas." I venture to say that this interpretation would not have occurred to any one who came to the verse without a preconceived notion of the facts. The 'and next' ignores a cruise of two hundred or two hundred and fifty miles, and that, too, the yacht's maiden voyage. Munro makes other requisitions on the poet's language which it will hardly bear. It did not escape him that the 'surly' Pontus is included in the same category in vss. 6-9 with Rhodes, the Cyclades, and the rest, which according to his own theory are named to trace the *poet's* voyage. The natural inference from this, that the Pontus was also included in the poet's journey, he meets by pointing out that the list of these places is divided into "three main sections" by

the conjunction *ve* in vss. 7 and 9 ; and on this basis he divides the yacht's voyage into three parts, in the first of which the poet was not on board. This is certainly ingenious, if not convincing. Again he argues that the poet's lack of personal knowledge of the first part of the yacht's voyage "might appear from his appeal to Amastris and Cytorus" (vss. 13 sqq.) ; overlooking the fact that throughout the whole account of the yacht's achievements the poet speaks as one who had no personal knowledge of the facts. This is a point to which I shall have occasion to return later.

But if we cannot follow Munro in twisting the poet's language into conformity with his view that the yacht's master embarked in it elsewhere than at Amastris, we must still admit the soundness of his contention that Catullus did not go to Amastris to embark for Italy. The poet's own words and the probabilities of the case alike forbid such a supposition. In taking leave of his friends at Nicaea (XLVI.), he is all eagerness to "fly to the illustrious cities of Asia," of which certainly none lay in the direction of Amastris : —

Linguantur Phrygii, Catulle, campi  
Nicaeaeque ager uber aestuosae ;  
ad claras Asiae uolemus urbes.

Ellis thinks that "to trace the legendary course of the Argo, if only for a part of its voyage, would be almost a sufficient motive" for the poet's journey, "in itself unnecessary," to Amastris. Perhaps so ; but how can we believe that he made this literary tour when he tells us himself that he was going somewhere else ? And, finally, is it credible that our poet, who we know came home from his Bithynian venture disappointed and as poor as he went out, would make the long journey to Amastris, toilsome and uninteresting by land, tedious and dangerous by sea, to purchase a fast-sailing pleasure-boat to carry him to Italy, — a boat, moreover, for which he would have no further use when he got there ? I, for one, cannot believe it.

The result, then, of our examination of the first part of the question is this : The language of the fourth poem requires us to believe that the master of the phaselus (the 'erus' of vs. 19) embarked in it at Amastris ; the poet's account of his own plans in XLVI. and all the probabilities of the case forbid us to believe that he went to Amastris to embark. From this dilemma there is no escape but in



abandoning the hypothesis that the poet was the master of the yacht.

Before leaving this part of the subject, I may observe that the expressions of eager anticipation in XLVI. are anything but suggestive of a slow voyage in a sailing-boat : —

ad claras Asiae uolemus urbes.  
Iam mens praetrepidans auet uagari,  
iam laeti studio pedes uigescunt.

If the language of the last verse is significant at all, it suggests a journey by land rather than by water. I need not refer to the numerous familiar phrases formed with *pes* or *pedes* to express locomotion on land, but it is worth while to recall two places in Horace where *pedes* is used for a land-journey in direct contrast with a sea-voyage : —

I pedes quo te rapiunt et aerae. C. III. 11. 49.

Ire pedes quocunque ferent, quocunque per undas

Notus vocabit aut protervus Africus. *Epod.* 16. 21.

Let us now turn to the end of the voyage and the scene of the poem. The traditional view is thus stated by Munro and repeated by Ellis : “Catullus represents himself as pointing out and praising to some guests, who were with him at his villa in Sirmio, the phaselus, now laid up beside the Benacus or Lago di Garda, which had carried him from Bithynia to Italy.” Westphal, as we have seen, dissented from this view, and cut the voyage short at some Adriatic port, where the poet commends the yacht to the friends who entertained him there. His reason for this is that a vessel that made the voyage from Asia to Italy would be too large to sail up the Po and the Mincio to Lake Garda. This notion, however, was not begotten of a practical knowledge of the sea, and Munro had no difficulty in showing that the boat need not have been too large. There can be no doubt that the owner of the yacht could bring it to the lake, if he wished to do so, though the navigation of the rivers was not improbably such that he would have to transport it at certain points. Munro thought that Catullus did not stay on the yacht in its slow journey up the rivers, but hastened by some quicker and more convenient route to Sirmio, — a view which he sought to sustain by a comparison with Ovid’s *Tristia*, I. 10. We need not enter into an examination of his arguments here. With or without Catullus on board, according to the common view, the yacht was taken to Sirmio ; and there certainly

Catullus himself went, as we know from XXXI., immediately on his return.

What object could Catullus have in taking the yacht to Sirmio? Nothing but a sentimental one, if we accept the common view; for he straightway proceeds, we are told, to dedicate the craft to Castor and Pollux. If we can believe that our poet, after his fruitless sojourn in an impoverished province (X. 6 sqq.), had the means to indulge his sentiment or his piety in this expensive fashion; if we resolve to stifle our doubt that a yacht of exceptional excellence, after its first cruise, or at least after a cruise which showed it was still in prime condition, and in which it had met with no mishap whatever, would be at once laid up and left to decay,—if we make up our minds to believe this, we are immediately treated to another and a greater surprise. The yacht has suddenly grown old,—

26 nunc senet quiete, —

truly a marvellous transformation from the fleet racer that only the other day sailed proudly over the Adriatic.

Westphal's theory does not help us here, but rather leaves us in a worse plight; for according to him this miraculous old age overtakes the yacht during the few days of the poet's sojourn in the Adriatic port where he parts company with it. Westphal, we must suppose, did not observe this difficulty. It was seen by Bruner, who suggested an ingenious solution which has been adopted by some recent editors. To most readers the speaker in the poem is the poet himself, who describes to his friends a real voyage, made by a real yacht, which lies before them; to Bruner the poem is a dedicatory inscription, designed to be set up on a tablet in a shrine of the Dioscuri on the shore of Lake Benacus. The idea that the poem was an inscription is not a new one. It was propounded two hundred years ago by Vossius, who thought the poet consecrated some portion of the yacht ("acrostolium aut aplustria") as an emblem of the whole. This seems hardly sufficient to meet the requirements of the poet's words, — 'phasellus ille quem uidetis,'—and Bruner suggested that the ἀνδράθημα must have been a picture of the yacht. Working on this hypothesis, Riese proceeds to deal with our difficulties as follows: The poem is an idealized description (poetisch verklärte Beschreibung) <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Einleitung, p. xv.

of Catullus' homeward voyage. "It combines reality — *e.g.* the description of the route — with fancy. The ship actually used for the long voyage cannot possibly . . . have come up to Lake Garda; Catullus, moreover, is represented as having embarked at Amastris, . . . and the ship is represented as having been laid up after its first voyage. This is all fancy, — though Catullus' may, of course, have purchased a ship for his use on the journey."

This theory withdraws the personality of the poet entirely from the poem; and the 'hospites' are no longer the friends of Catullus, but only the vague 'strangers' commonly addressed in epitaphs. I find it a little difficult in reading the poem to bring myself to this view of it. The lively personification of the yacht itself I can understand if I think of it in actual presence before the poet and his friends, but hardly in a mural inscription under a painted boat. "With this dedicatory poem," Riese further says, "he thanks the gods for his happy return."<sup>1</sup> But I find in the poem no expression or intimation of gratitude to the gods. On the contrary, it is so wholly occupied with the merits of the ship that gratitude to heaven is quite excluded; in fact, it is part of the ship's boast that *no vows were made* anywhere on the voyage (vs. 22). Yet we are told by at least one editor that these verses were written for a *votive* tablet! Finally I know of no instance of a thank-offering *dedicating itself* to the gods, and this seems all the more inappropriate if it is nothing but a picture.

But if we could accept the inscription hypothesis, how much would it help us? Riese, as we have seen, disposes of our difficulties by treating the parts of the poem which give rise to them as fancy. I find it hard to follow him here. Catullus had had an actual voyage, had returned home in safety, had something to be thankful for, and *was* thankful, as XXXI. shows. In this frame of mind he proceeds to compose a permanent memorial of his gratitude to the protecting deities, in which he mixes fiction with fact in the most unblushing manner, and with no apparent object. What object, for example, could he have in saying he had sailed in the yacht from Amastris, if he did not sail from Amastris? What object in saying the yacht "came from the farthest sea all the way to this limpid lake," if it did not come near the lake? Does the description of the phaselus fit

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<sup>1</sup> Einleitung, p. xv.

the actual ship in which the poet sailed, or is that, too, mere fiction? If fiction, I ask again, to what purpose? Why exaggerate the praise of the ship in a way to belittle the benefit of the gods? If fact, then we come back to our old difficulty: this admirable ship is suddenly grown old, and laid away to rot at the end of its first voyage. And whether fact or fiction really makes little difference: such a ship is *represented* as so laid up and grown old. It does not help the matter to say the representation is pure fancy: the poet cannot ask us to fancy what is palpably absurd and incredible. We can no more believe that Catullus represented the yacht as growing old and useless in a few weeks than we can believe that it did so in fact.

Nor does Catullus so represent it. His language throughout is that of one describing *past* achievements. From the opening words —

Phasellus ille quem uidetis, hospites,  
ait *fuisse* nauium celerrimus —

to the end, the perfect tense is prominent; not only the voyage but the excellence of the craft is placed emphatically in the past; and in conclusion he sums it all up with

Sed haec *prius* *fuere*; *nunc* recondita  
senet quiete.

What could be more manifest than that the history of the yacht belonged to a period now closed, and separated by an interval from the present?

By how long an interval? Common sense answers, by an interval long enough for the yacht to become worn out and no longer fit for active service. The two years that are usually thought to have elapsed between the return of Catullus and his death are not long enough; and if this was the yacht's first voyage, which is a natural inference from the description, the period of ten years which we should gain by accepting Ellis' dates, is not long enough.

There are two conceivable motives to which the composition of this eulogy of a yacht may be ascribed: one, that it was the poet's own, that he had made in it the one great voyage of his life, and that he therefore felt a personal interest in it and an attachment for it:

the other, that the yacht was in some way remarkable in itself or distinguished by some achievement. The former is the traditional hypothesis which has thus far been discussed, which is admitted by all who have examined the question carefully to be involved in serious difficulties, and which I hold to be untenable because, unsupported as it is by any proof, the corollaries which we must accept with it are not only improbable, but contradictory and absurd. The other hypothesis I have not seen anywhere suggested, but it deserves consideration.

Let us look at the two hypotheses in the light of the poet's own words.

The most obvious fact that presents itself to the reader is that the poet does not speak as of his own knowledge; he simply acts as spokesman for the yacht, and his language is that of an interpreter. He tells the story as if the yacht had told it to him or were telling it to him then in its own language. This is impressed upon us at the outset: —

Phasellus ille quem uidetis, hospites,  
*ait* fuisse nauium celerrimus, —

and it is made prominent throughout: —

6 et hoc *negat* minacis Adriatici  
negare litus —  
14 tibi haec fuisse et esse cognitissima  
*ait* phasellus; ultima ex origine  
tuo stetit *dicit* in cacumine.

It is only when he comes to the present time and scene that he speaks as of his own knowledge: —

25 Sed haec prius fuere; nunc recondita  
senet quiete seque dedicat, etc.

The reader will observe further that the yacht tells its story as if the poet who speaks for it were no more cognizant of the facts than the friends to whom he repeats them; its appeal for confirmation of its statements to the distant places which had witnessed its exploits conveys the impression that there was no present witness to whom it could appeal. I have already alluded to the partial way in which

Munro has made use of this feature of the poem in support of the view that Catullus did not embark at Amastris. That Catullus, he says, "did not personally know the first part of the yacht's voyage might appear from his appeal to Amastris and Cytorus: all this, the growth of the wood, the first launching of the ship, you, Amastris and Cytorus, know, it says, and know full well, even if I do not." This is true; but it does not apply, as Munro applied it, to the first part of the voyage only. The yacht appeals equally for confirmation of its claims to the "coast of the menacing Adriatic, the Cyclades and famous Rhodes, the rough Thracian Propontis, and the savage Pontic gulf," — in short, to all the seas and islands which it names at all.

I do not maintain that this fact is necessarily inconsistent with the supposition that Catullus is describing his own voyage. He *may* have chosen to cast his poem in this form, to speak as if he had no personal knowledge of the facts he reports. Scholars will differ as to the probability of such a supposition. But that he does so speak all must concede; and in the absence of any direct evidence, this fact must have its weight.

Again, Catullus *may* have chosen to disguise all personal interest in the yacht which had brought him safely home "over so many wild seas"; certainly he betrays none. I have already referred to the excursion which Munro made into Ovid's *Tristia* in search of light on our poem. The tenth poem of the *Tristia* has for its subject the ship in which Ovid sailed from Cenchreae on the Isthmus to the Hellespont and thence back to Samothrace, where the poem was written. From Samothrace the ship was to sail to Tomi, while Ovid crossed over to Thrace and proceeded by land. In his poem there are certainly reminiscences of Catullus, as in the couplet

Siue opus est uelis, minimam bene currit ad auram,  
siue opus est remo, remige carpit iter.

From these reminiscences Munro sought to draw certain inferences in regard to the facts of Catullus' voyage, which are, as it seems to me, quite unwarranted; but with these we are not now concerned. What I am surprised Munro did not notice, is the contrast between the two poems in the matter of the personal interest of the poets in

the ships they celebrate. Ovid does not for a moment leave us in doubt on this point. He begins :—

Est mihi, sitque precor flauae tutela Mineruae,  
nauis, et a picta casside nomen habet.

He then goes on to praise his ship in verses of which I have quoted two above ; he tells of his first acquaintance with her and of their subsequent companionship ; she has remained to that day the trusty guide and comrade of the anxious exile—

fida manet trepidae duxque comesque fugae ;

his prayers go forth with her when she leaves him at Samothrace :—

Nunc quoque tuta precor, uasti secat ostia Ponti,  
quasque petit Gætica litoris intret aquas ;

and he offers vows for the safe completion of her voyage, to the detailed description of which the rest of the poem is devoted.

All this is in marked contrast with the phaselus poem. Read it through from beginning to end, we find no intimation that the poet ever set foot on the yacht, no hint that he had any personal interest in it which he could not ask the friends whom he addressed to share. And this is Catullus, the most direct, the most unreserved, the most transparent of Roman poets. Can any poem of his be named in which, recording a personal experience, he disguises all personal knowledge of it, or having a personal interest in the subject of his verse, he fails to disclose it?

Why should we not take the poem for just what it is? It records no personal history. It is wholly given up to the praises of the yacht,— of its distinguished origin, its matchless speed, its brilliant sailing qualities, its fortunate voyage. If it be asked why it should be singled out for such eulogy, the answer ought not to be difficult.

The actual data of the poem are simple and clear. On an Italian lake is a yacht of remarkable excellence which had been brought by its owner from Amastris, on the Euxine, where it was built. What the lake was we do not certainly know, but Lake Garda is the only one with which we know our poet had anything to do. Who the owner was we know still less. It may have been Catullus' father, who was a man of means, and may have had connections with the

East, a supposition to which the fact that the poet's brother died there lends some support. It may, however, have been some one else who had a villa on the lake. His name may have been Serenus. In any case it was somebody who could afford to purchase a pleasure yacht in Bithynia for use on the lake at home. Arrived there, this boat with a foreign name must have become conspicuous at once, — by its graceful lines, by its great speed, and above all by its solitary distinction of having sailed on the open sea all the way from the Euxine to Italy. Among the homely craft of the lake this genuine

Pontica pinus,  
siluae filia nobilis,

would hold a unique place and be the boast of the neighborhood for many a day.

“Sed haec prius fuere” : all this was before our poet's time. When he points out the yacht to his friends, its prowess and its achievements are only a memory. Its days of service are over. It lies on the shore, a reminder, to all who know its history, of the goodness of the twin deities who long ago, without so much as demanding a vow for their service, had brought it safely through its dangerous journey.